

## U.S. Seen Closer To Pueblo Accord

There were growing indications in Washington yesterday that the United States finally may be getting somewhere in its attempts to get Communist North Korea to free the 82 surviving crew members of the captured U.S. Navy intelligence ship Pueblo.

For one thing, the most recent session between U.S. and North Korean representatives at Panmunjom on Tuesday lasted two hours and 40 minutes. Under questioning, State Department spokesman Robert J. McCloskey acknowledged that it was "one of the longer" meetings in the long negotiating series since North Korea captured the Pueblo off its shore on Jan. 23.

Another indication was that McCloskey said he "expected" there will be another meeting. McCloskey usually does not say he "expects" a meeting until he has word a meeting has been scheduled—and then he announces it only after it has taken place.

[The Seoul daily newspaper Kyunghyang Shinmoon reported that U.S. and North Korean representatives met again Thursday, according to the Associated Press.]

Moreover, since the previous Pueblo talk was on Oct. 30, a month and a half before Tuesday's, the talks now would appear to contain

enough substance to require a quicker follow-up.

Another indicator was McCloskey's "no comment" when asked if the two sides now were working on a wording of the statement.

The Boston Herald-Traveler's Washington correspondent reported yesterday that the wording of a U.S. apology statement was the subject of Tuesday's meeting and final details on this were to be worked out soon at a follow-up meeting.

U.S. officials would not comment. Indeed they could not be expected to comment, lest this prejudice the chance of getting the Pueblo crewmen released.

But it is understood that Winthrop G. Brown, a former U.S. Ambassador to South Korea and now Deputy Assistant Secretary of State with particular responsibility for the Pueblo situation, has for some time presented President Johnson with various statements he might make to get the North Koreans to act.

North Korea repeatedly has said that before it releases the Pueblo crew it must have a personal apology from President Johnson that the ship intruded into North Korea's territorial waters, and a commitment that such intrusions will not recur.

Until now, the United States has insisted that the Pueblo was in international waters at the time of capture. It also has offered to have an international body investigate whether the Pueblo ever intruded into North Korea's territorial waters prior to the capture period. But the United States wants the men released before any such inquiry begins.